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ABSTRACT

Three questions were addressed in this study: 1) What are the levels of relationships among level of moral development, attitudes toward teaching and role specific self-concept in a group of entering teacher education candidates? 2) What differences exist between elementary and secondary candidates in areas of moral development, teacher attitudes and self-concept? and 3) In what different ways would candidates at distinct levels of moral development describe ideal teacher behavior? While no significant difference was found between elementary and secondary candidates, findings indicated a relationship exists between teacher attitudes and moral judgment. An analysis of the findings is presented and implications for improving teacher preparation are discussed. (JD)

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MORAL DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATIONAL ATTITUDES AND SELF-CONCEPT IN BEGINNING TEACHER EDUCATION STUDENTS

Merle Marks

A major assumption underlying most teacher education programs is that attitudes and values affect performance. There has been considerable study of personal characteristics such as teacher attitudes and self-concept and their relationship to teacher effectiveness, but little research which focuses on attitudes and conceptions of rules in the classroom and the larger questions of ethical and moral previsions for classrooms. Recent work in the area of moral development (Kohlberg, 1976; Rest, 1976) has shown that individuals vary in the way that they view moral and ethical problems and that these views are related to general cognitive structures which are developmental in nature. The level of moral judgment of a teacher can reasonably be expected to influence performance because it is related to the teacher's views about the nature and function of classroom rules and students' interactions with these rules. The focus of this study is the relationship between beginning teachers' moral development and the attitudes they have about teaching, children and themselves in the role of teacher.

The question of interest in this study was the relationship between personal factors such as educational attitudes, teaching-specific self-concept and level of moral development in beginning teacher candidates. In addition, initial differences in these variables between elementary and secondary level candidates were sought.

STUDY QUESTIONS

Three questions were addressed in this study: (1) what are the

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levels of relationships among level of moral development, attitudes about teaching and role specific self-concept in a group of entering teacher education candidates? (2) What differences exist between elementary and secondary candidates in the areas of moral development, teacher attitudes and self-concept? (3) In what different ways would candidates at distinct levels of moral development describe ideal teacher behavior?

RELATED RESEARCH

Rest (1974) devised the Definining Issues Test (DIT) as an alternative assessment of moral development to the more cumbersome interview method created by Kohlberg and associates (Kohlberg, Lieberman, Speicher, 1973). The DIT consists of a series of moral dilemmas with twleve responses to each dilemma. The S ranks the prepared responses to the dilemmas in terms of his/her agreement with items as appropriate responses to the dilemmas. The responses are written to reflect reasoning at various levels of moral development so that selection of particular responses corresponds to level of moral development. Rest reported a high correlation between the DIT and Kohlberg interviews (Rest, 1976, p. 218). There has been considerable research on the moral characteristics of various populations e.g., high school students, undergraduate and graduate students, and work on facilitating moral development in high school and college groups (Fenton, 1978); however, there has been little inquiry focused specifically upon the relationship between moral development and teaching.

The Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory (MTAI) (Cook, Leeds, Callis, 1972) is a widely used inventory designed to study attitudes about teaching and students. Higher scores on the test indicate tolerant, accepting and progressive attitudes toward educational issues. Early studies found MTAI scores to correlate moderately to highly with expert ratings of teacher effectiveness (Cook, Leeds, Callis, 1972, p. 11). In addition, these attitudes have been found to change as a result of professional programs and early experience in teaching.

The Peterson Yaakobi Q-Sort (Peterson, Yaakobi, 1979) was used to (a) assess teacher role specific self-concept and (b) make a comparison of ideal teacher behavior as described by candidates at two district levels of moral development. The PYQS procedure has Ss rank order 24 teacher behavior item statements (e.g., "keep an orderly classroom") in each of two identical card decks. The first sort is to describe ideal teacher behavior; the second sort is to describe the S as he/she actually behaves. The self-concept measure is a rank order correlation coefficient between the two sorts: how willing is the person to describe him/herself in their own ideal terms? Next, the PYQS enables behavioral item analysis for difference in mean rank as sorted by groups, in this study by Ss at different levels of moral development. Groups of teachers and teacher candidates have been reported to vary by program on both self-concept levels and specific item group rankings (Peterson, Yaakobi, 1979, p. 437).

METHODOLOGY

The population for the study consisted of 40 elementary level and 31 secondary teacher education students enrolled in the first quarter of professional education courses at the University of Utah. Students ranged from their junior year of college to post-baccalaureate degree. DIT, MTAI and PYQS tests were administered to all candidates at the beginning of the Fall quarter.

Three kinds of statistical analysis were used in the study. Product-moment correlations were computed among scores on the DIT, MTAI and PYQS. Second, two-tailed t-tests for significance of mean group differences between elementary and secondary level candidates were performed on the first three measures. Finally, DIT cutoff scores of 30 on the "P" scale (Rest, 1974, p. 22) were used to identify candidates as either preprincipled or principled. The mean rank of each behavioral item statement in the PYQS was then analyzed for significance of difference using the Mann-Whitney U test. These procedures are correlational and ex post facto research strategies.

FINDINGS

Table 1 presents the product-moment correlational findings among the measures used in this study. A statistically significant positive correlation was found between scores on the DIT and MTAI.

-- Table 1 --

Table 2 presents the results of significance tests on mean score differences between elementary and secondary candidates on the DIT, MTAI and PYQS. None of these differences were found to be significant.

-- Table 2 --

The mean rank of each item by group (principled or preprincipled thinker) and significance test results are presented in Table 3. Four items were found to vary in mean rank according to group ($p < .05$).

-- Table 3 --

Binomial test probability for finding four items out of 24 at this level is $< .01$. Ranked significantly higher by the principled group as descriptors of the ideal teacher were "gives test questions which require problem solving," "encourages and responds to student ideas and suggestions" and "influences school policies outside the classroom." The preprincipled group significantly ranked the item "keeps an orderly classroom" higher.

DISCUSSION

The moderate but significant postive correlation found between level of moral development and attitudes about education provides support for the idea that the cognitive structure of a person, at least in the area of moral judgment, is related to how he/she views educational issues. This relationship might be present because teaching is in the broadest sense, as many education philosophers maintain, a moral task. If teaching does have a strong moral component, the entry and exit moral judgment levels of preservice teachers as well as the question of how to facilitate the moral development of teacher candidates should be of concern to teacher educators. This finding does support the need for further studies of how the level of moral judgment is related to success in a preparation program and ultimately to success in teaching.

The findings of non-significant differences between elementary and secondary level candidates on the DIT, MTAI, and PYQS suggest that selection of teaching as a profession is more important than selection of age level to teach for these measures. This finding for the MTAI is somewhat contrary to other studies (Cook, Leeds, Callis, 1972, p. 12). The mean scores for the two groups on the DIT fit well within the range of scores reported for college students by Rest (1976, p. 44) indicating that in terms of moral judgment, the Ss in this study are similar to other college groups.

The comparison of rankings of descriptors of the ideal teacher between principled and preprincipled Ss suggests that the higher level thinkers are more oriented toward the development of an intellectual and participative climate in the classroom and toward assuming an activist role in the formulation of school policy, while the preprincipled thinkers appear to be more interested in conformity-oriented behaviors such as keeping an orderly classroom and following rules. Whether these initial orientations will affect candidates during their professional training and indicate ability to understand and consider new ideas in teacher education programs is not clear. However the possibility of this interaction is great enough to warrant follow-up studies on these topics.

This study also raises interesting questions about the relationship between the development of moral judgment and the ways that teachers view classrooms and students. Does the fact that preprincipled S are more likely to view rules as absolutes influence the way they formulate,

teach and enforce rules in the classroom? More pragmatically, can the DIT, or instruments like it, be effectively used to investigate the cognitive structures that teachers use to understand teaching and then to study the relationship between cognitive structures and teacher effectiveness? The results of this study suggest that these are questions that deserve further investigation.

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TABLE 1

Product-Moment Correlation Matrix
For Measures in this Study - All Subjects Combined

	PYQS	MTAI
DIT	r=-.22 n= 47 p= .14	r=.31 n= 47 p=.04
PYQS		r=.01 n= 65 p=.92

TABLE 2

Tests of Significance of Differences on Measures Between Elementary and Secondary Candidates

Measure	Group	N	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	t (df)	P	Decision
DIT (moral development)	Elementary	24	24.08	8.90	-1.45(46)	.15	Not Significant
	Secondary	24	27.54	7.64			
MTAI (teacher attitudes)	Elementary	39	41.05	25.30	.76(68)	.45	Not Significant
	Secondary	31	36.23	27.75			
PYQS (self-concept)	Elementary	36	.77	.21	-1.07(59.9)	.29	Not Significant
	Secondary	30	.82	.13			

TABLE 3

Rankings of Ideal Teacher Descriptors by Level of Moral Development

ITEM	RANK			
	Principled[a]	Pre-Principled[b]	z	p
Acts at ease in classroom, not nervous	43.7[c]	35.3	-1.40	.17
Uses punishment to maintain control	38.4	36.6	- .29	.77
Keeps an orderly classroom	50.8	33.4	-2.83	.01
Creates comfortable learning environment	35.2	37.5	- .38	.70
Has students use self-evaluation	31.4	38.4	-1.15	.25
Gives memorizing test questions	42.2	35.7	-1.09	.28
Uses only test scores for grading	31.9	38.3	-1.06	.29
Gives problem solving test questions	25.2	40.0	-2.42	.02
Is disorganized	30.3	38.7	-1.43	.15
Shares teaching problems with teachers	31.0	38.6	-1.24	.21
Works & talks often with other teach.	37.5	36.9	- .10	.92
Students are important as individuals	38.9	36.5	- .43	.67
Talks with students about pers. probl.	36.0	37.3	- .21	.83
Quickly returns student work, feedback	33.4	37.9	- .74	.46
Fills class time with work	41.8	35.8	-1.00	.32
Uses non-understandable words	39.9	36.2	- .60	.55
Asks questions that make stus. think	31.7	38.4	-1.10	.27
Uses what stus. want in class design	40.2	36.2	- .66	.51
Uses only one teaching approach	33.8	37.8	- .67	.50
Encourages & responds to stus. ideas	25.8	39.9	-2.32	.02
Follows school rules and procedures	42.8	35.5	-1.19	.23
Influences school policies outside room	27.5	39.5	-1.97	.05
Initiates contact with parents	31.0	38.5	-1.23	.22
Effectively gets across subject matter	41.4	35.9	- .90	.37

[a] N=15

[b] N=56

[c] Mann-Whitney test: mean rank of subjects' ranks